

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: Academic, Animal Care, Epidemiologists, HETL, City and County Health Departments, All Healthcare, Lab Facilities, County EMA, Maine Medical Association, Public Health, EMS Regional Coordinators, Regional Resource Centers

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director
Dr. Stephen Sears, State Epidemiologist

SUBJECT: Eastern Equine Encephalitis Positive Pheasant

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Eastern Equine Encephalitis Positive Pheasant

On September 10, 2012 Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) confirmed Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in a pheasant flock from Lebanon in York County. Maine CDC and the Maine Department of Agriculture were notified of multiple deaths in a pheasant flock in the first week of September. The bird that tested positive died on September 6th as a result of the infection.

This is the first report of EEE activity in Maine in 2012, however, 4 pools of mosquitoes tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) earlier this year. Like WNV, EEE is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is the most severe arboviral illness in the United States. It can cause illness in humans, horses, llamas, alpacas, and game birds. While there is a vaccine for horses, there is no human vaccine to protect against EEE. Treatment is based on alleviating the symptoms of the infection. In the fall of 2008, a Massachusetts resident vacationing in Cumberland County died of the disease; it is unclear where he contracted the infection. In 2009, Maine experienced unprecedented EEE activity with 19 animals and 2 mosquito pools testing positive. Regionally there has been EEE activity in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont in 2012, including 5 human cases – 2 in Vermont and 3 in Massachusetts.

Prevention:

Maine CDC recommends the following preventative measures to protect against EEE and other mosquito-borne illnesses:

- **Use an EPA approved repellent when outdoors, especially around dawn and dusk** – always follow the instructions on the product's label
- Wear protective clothing when outdoors, including long-sleeved shirts, pants, and socks
- Use screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of your home
- Limit time outdoors at dawn and dusk when many species of mosquitoes are most active
- Practice household mosquito-source reduction: standing water should be removed from artificial water-holding containers in and around the house
- Vaccinate horses (there are effective vaccines to prevent EEE and WNV in horses; horses with arboviral illness do not pose a risk to human health)

Testing:

Maine CDC encourages providers to test for arboviral illness in patients presenting with unexplained encephalitis, meningitis or high fever (greater than 100.4°F or 38°C) during the late summer and early fall.

If arboviral infection is suspected based on clinical evidence, serum samples and CSF (if available) should be submitted for arboviral testing. Arboviral testing for EEE and WNV can be performed at HETL. HETL requires the submitter to complete an arboviral submission form. All samples of CSF should be accompanied by a serum sample. Ideally an acute and a convalescent serum sample should be submitted for each patient.

- Acute serum samples should be collected within 14 days of onset of symptoms
- Convalescent serum samples should be collected 10 days to 4 weeks following the acute specimen

Reporting:

Arboviral illness is reportable in Maine. All suspect cases, and any positive laboratory reports should be reported by phone to the disease reporting and consultation line at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax to 1-800-293-7534.

More Information:

More information on arboviral illness is available at Maine CDC's Vector-Borne Disease website at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vector-borne/index.shtml>.

Information on pesticides and repellents is available at the Maine Board of Pesticides Control website at <http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/public/index.htm#mosquito>.